

## Applying for and Obtaining a Certificate from the Commission

Until the proper certificate has been issued by the Historic Districts Commission, no building permit may be issued for work on a property within an historic district, nor may painting or any other construction work be done on site **whether or not a building permit is required**. Filing the application for a certificate, therefore, should be a high priority. Although the commission cannot take applications by telephone, it stands ready to discuss questions, objectives and proposals at any stage of the process. Consulting with the commission before hiring an architect or contractor is especially helpful, because the commission can provide information about its requirements as well as guidance on the acceptability of the work that is contemplated. Residents wishing more information should call the Administrator at 781-741-1492, or stop by the Historical Commissions office at the Town Office Building.

Application forms for certificates are available from the Historical Commissions' office and the Building Commissioner's office in the Town Office Building at 210 Central Street, and they should be filed with the Building Department before a building permit can be issued. It is the owner's duty, not the architect's or contractor's, to make the application. The information provided on the application must accurately define the entire work. Applications for certificates of appropriateness must be prepared in triplicate and should be accompanied by three sets of elevation drawings (existing and proposed), a site plan, floor plans, specifications, samples and other exhibits necessary to describe the project. One set of color photographs showing the work site is always required. Applications must be clearly legible, complete, and signed by the owner of record. Once filed, the Administrator will review them for completeness or other officer of the Historic Districts Commission, who may request additional information as needed.



*Greek Revival Cottage, 1840's) 18 West Street*

Some types of work require a public hearing by the Historic Districts Commission, while others need only a judgment by the Administrator that the proposed work is consistent with the structure and its neighborhood, and does not detract from the purposes of the By-Law



*ISAAC HINKLEY HOUSE (Federal, 1811) 126 Main Street*

A certificate of non-applicability normally does not involve a hearing and may be obtained within a few days after the application is filed. Most proposals for routine maintenance and minor renovations, the majority of applications submitted, fall into this category. Certification is virtually automatic when existing materials or colors are used, when new ones are selected from an approved roster and when alterations are insignificant or are not visible from any public area as determined by the Commission. Property owners wishing to change materials or colors, however, must apply to the commission for review and a certificate of appropriateness.

A certificate of appropriateness or a certificate of hardship always requires a hearing. Major alterations, such as an addition, naturally call for a full review and thus a public hearing. Owners whose applications require a public hearing should file at least 30 days before the certificate is needed, bearing in mind the additional time that may be required for a building permit. The hearing will be conducted (a minimum of 3 members must be present) by the Historic Districts Commission. The commission reviews the proposed work, solicits comments from interested parties and may suggest modifications. The commission then takes a formal vote by which it approves the plan as submitted, approves it with changes, or denies the application. The commission may also continue the hearing until the next hearing date if additional information or significant changes are required.

Once an application has been approved, the commission will issue three copies of the certificate within two weeks, one to the applicant, one to the Building Commissioner and one to the Town Clerk. The applicant may then proceed with any other steps necessary to obtain a building permit. Every certificate expires six months from the date of issue unless there is substantial progress, but the commission may decide to renew it without a new hearing.